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Final accepted version (with author's formatting)

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*“Water, water everywhere and not a  
drop to drink”*

The constant conundrum of older  
peoples care

Dr Trish Hafford-Letchfield



**Hungry to be heard (Age Concern, 2006)**

**Human Rights in Healthcare,  
DoH, 2008**

**Report of the Mid Staffordshire  
NHS Foundation Trust  
Public Inquiry, Francis (2013)**

*Drink atleast 8 glasses of water  
a day*

**Hospitals on the  
edge? The time  
for action, Royal  
College of  
Physicians, 2012**

**Ombudsman  
Report, 2006**

**Dignity and nutrition inspection programme,  
Care Quality Commission, 2012**

**‘Compassion in practice for nurses, midwives  
and care staff’ DoH, 2012**

**Human Rights in  
Healthcare: A  
Framework  
for local action, DoH,  
2008**

**Treating patients and service users with respect, dignity and compassion, DoH, 2013**



# Water is vital to life

**Not just a risk factor in recovery  
but an abuse of human rights**

- Fluid deprivation as a symbol for system failures
- 'Unoticing' environments
- Ageing population as a game-changer
- Despite considerable guidance, protocols and action plans, these issues persist?????

Care settings should be somewhere where an older person enjoys living and staff enjoy working



# Human Rights

- **Article 2:** The right to life
- **Article 3:** The right not to be tortured or treated in an inhuman way or degrading way - Inhuman treatment means causing severe mental or physical suffering

## Relevant issues in care

Malnutrition and dehydration in care settings

Physical or mental abuse

Over medication, inappropriate medication

Use of physical restraint

Soiled linen, clothing

Leaving trays without helping patients to eat where they are not able to feed themselves

Separation of partners and lack of intimacy

Lack of dignity and confidentiality



*From Dennis and Allen, (2011)*

# Speaking from care



## Contextual

- High thresholds and stringent eligibility criteria with insufficient investment in prevention
- Dilemmas of how failing services are supported
- Ageism, structured dependency (Townsend, 2006) and revolving debates on the cost rather than the assets from an increasingly ageing population.
- Participation and citizenship

## Professional

- Persistent evidence that Older People are the least preferred group that SW students want to work with.
- Neglect is the most unreported form of abuse within safeguarding policies and practice
- Challenges and dilemmas in older people's care are more frequently framed as problems of inadequate or inappropriate service provision, poor service standards, or difficulties of multiagency joint working, morality.



# Moving to the edge of new frontiers?

ARTS



Gerontology

1. How can education and research at Middlesex equip professionals with the necessary knowledge, skills and values to work with the changing needs of a diverse ageing population?



Business ethics

2. To what extent are education and research equipping care professionals to work effectively with older people within the current practice context and what cross disciplinary knowledge and research might we draw upon?



# References

- Dennis, M., Allen, J. (2011) Food and drink – the basic requirements of life. *Journal of Adult Protection*, 13(2) pp 167-173
- Townsend, P. (2006) 'Policies for the aged in the 21st century: more 'structured dependency' or the realisation of human rights?' *Ageing and Society*, 26(2):161-80.